5: Hamilton G-5 (no date) 1943 MM2 Hadhramaut MM2

643 425 The Sultan of Lahej rules over the territory of the 'Abdali tribe, and his frontier marches with the northern frontier of Aden Colony. He is descended from a Yafa'i family, who were appointed as Governors of Lahej by an Imam of San'a. Later they revolted against the Imams and declared their independence. By purchase, Imamic grants and seizure they own a considerable portion of the Lahej lands; they are of foreign origin to the tribe over which they rule.

The Amirs of Dhala' were appointed Governors of the Dhala' province, including the lands of the tribes of Halumein, Ahmad, Azraq and Shu'Ar, by the Imamas of San'a, and, later, of the lands of Sha'ib by a Sultan of Turkey. I see that the official handbook describes the Amirs of Dhala' as descendants from slaves. It is surprising how such obvious inaccuracies persist. To see that they have no slave blood in them requires no more than ordinary eyesight, and it would be impossible for an Imam of San'a to appoint a slave to any post, since there are no slaves in the Yemen at all, slavery being forbidden by the tenets of the Zeidi sect. The Amirs are of typical Central Yemeni type, such as is found on the Yemen plateau.

567 795 144

643 Later, they rebelled against the Imams and established their independence. Thus they rule over a confederation of small tribes, while belonging to none of them.

These appointed Suzerains, of whom the Sultan of Makalla is one, form a distinct class among Arab Chiefs. They do not mix with their tribesmen in the usual democratic Arab way, but stand apart, as it were, and are addressed by titles of exaggerated respect. Not being tribesmen of the tribe they rule, they have no traditional and family holds over the people and their attitudes towards their tribesmen are those of foreign rulers. They do not, as a rule, favour elected hereditary headmen in their villages, but prefer to appoint outsiders as headmen, whom they pay as retainers.

When a Suzerain dies, the election of the new Chief is held by the family only and the tribesmen are not consulted.

622 792 The accepted Suzerains are represented by one example only—the Sharifs of Beihan. It is, however, an interesting example.

628 648 In Beihan there are settlements of Sharifs and of Seyyids. There are also two tribes among whom these holy men live. Both the Sharifs and the Seyyids are arms-bearing families, and for some time were divided by a feud. Before the Great War, the elected Chief of the Sharifs, a far-sighted man called Ahmad, negotiated a treaty of protection and friendship with Great Britain. In this he gained the support of the lower tribe and of half the upper tribe, which was divided by a feud. After the Great War he concluded a truce with the Seyyids, and consolidated his relationships with his supporters among the tribesmen, who amounted to three-quarters of the population of Beihan. They accepted him as Suzerain and as their general agent for dealing with their foreign affairs. Thus, while he is undoubtedly a Suzerain, he is one of limited authority. He does not claim taxes from the land or the trade except in his own settlements, and is, consequently, very poor. But, for all that, the influence of the Sharifs is considerable in all the Beihan area. Their position is not, of course, unique in Arabia, but it is doubtful if any others than holy men could find themselves in a similar one.